



# TNRCC REGULATORY GUIDANCE

Water Utilities Division, Public Drinking Water Section

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RG-287

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SUBJECT: "Boil Water" Notices

Despite their best efforts, public utilities and other water suppliers are sometimes unable to furnish a continuous supply. When an interruption in service occurs, consumers may need to take the precautionary measure of boiling water they will drink, use for making ice, or use in preparing food. In most cases, a supplier will know to issue a *Boil Water Notification* only **after** an interruption in service has occurred. Therefore, the TNRCC prepared this guidance document to inform consumers in advance and to address questions that often arise.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **When should I boil my tap water?** When your supplier has issued a *Boil Water Notification*, when service has been interrupted, or when a natural disaster (like a flood or hurricane) has occurred and there is reason to believe that water quality has been compromised. (Also see "When should my supplier issue a *Boil Water Notification*?" below.)
- **Why?** When service is interrupted and the supplier's distribution lines are emptied, contaminants can enter the lines that supply your water. Contaminants can also enter a water system during flooding. And there are times when test results indicate there may be a problem with the supply or how the water is treated. Although waterborne diseases are extremely rare, they can be serious. Infants, the elderly, and persons with immune deficiency disorders have a higher risk of being adversely affected. Boiling water before you drink it or use it for cooking purposes will provide increased assurance that the water is safe for human consumption.
- **How long should it be boiled?** For at least two minutes after it reaches a full boil.
- **Should I take any other precautions?** After service is restored, you should flush your service line and household plumbing. Begin with the outside faucet farthest from your meter. Run water through each faucet or fixture until you notice a change in water temperature. Remove the aerator before flushing kitchen or bathroom faucets. This flushing procedure will take five minutes or less. Flushing should remove any air or contaminants which may have entered your plumbing system when the service was interrupted.
- **Why does the water appear dirty or cloudy after an interruption?** When service is restored, water passing through distribution lines may cause mineral deposits in those lines to break loose. These will appear as small bits of matter in the water and are usually white or light brown in color. This type of "particulate matter" does NOT affect the safety of the water. However, flushing your service line and plumbing system as described above should help. Water may have a cloudy or milky appearance when it contains dissolved oxygen or air. This sometimes occurs after a service interruption because the water mixes with air as it fills the distribution system.
- **When should my supplier issue a *Boil Water Notification*?** Under TNRCC rules, a *Boil Water Notification* must be issued under each of the following circumstances. (See flowchart on following page.)
  - ▶ When pressure in the distribution system drops below 20 psi, there has been an outage in all or part of the system and the system cannot be adequately flushed and disinfected.
  - ▶ When unacceptable microbiological samples are found repeatedly.
  - ▶ When inadequate chlorine residuals are found repeatedly.
  - ▶ When the supplier is directed to issue a *Notification* by the TNRCC because of special circumstances; for example, high turbidity levels.
- **How is the *Notification* given to customers?** The *Notification* may be hand-delivered or communicated via local media (newspapers, radio, television). It must be provided within 24 hours.

- **What should the *Notification* say?** Required wording for a *Boil Water Notification* is provided below in both English and Spanish. The supplier should provide more than one official or phone number and should not list the TNRCC as a primary contact.
- **How will I know when the water is safe again?** Your supplier will take several water samples throughout the distribution system to test the water after service has been restored. After ensuring that adequate pressure and chlorine levels have been restored, and after bacteriological monitoring shows the water is free of contamination, the *Boil Water Notification* may be lifted and this precautionary measure may be discontinued.
- **What should I do if I think the water has made me sick?** You should see your doctor or other health care provider if you become ill. Physicians have the necessary expertise to determine whether a waterborne illness has occurred and they are required to report such outbreaks to the Texas Department of Health.

#### Boil Water Notification

Due to conditions which have occurred recently in the water system, the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission has required the system to notify all customers to boil their water prior to consumption.

To ensure destruction of all harmful bacteria and other microbes, water for drinking, cooking, and ice making should be boiled and cooled prior to consumption. The water should be brought to a vigorous rolling boil and then boiled for two minutes. In lieu of boiling, you may purchase bottled water or obtain water from some other suitable source. When it is no longer necessary to boil the water, water system officials will notify you.

If you have any questions regarding this matter you may contact:

Utility officials

Phone numbers

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#### Aviso de Hervir Agua

Debido a problemas surgidos recientemente en el sistema de agua potable, la **Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission** (TNRCC) le exige a los usuarios que hiervan el agua antes de tomar o usar para cocinar.

Para estar seguro de que toda la bacteria y los microbios han sido eliminados, el agua para beber, que va a usar para cocinar o usar para hacer hielo, debe ser hervido y después déjelo enfriar antes de consumirlo. El agua debe llegar a un punto vigoroso de ebullición y dejar hirviendo por dos minutos. Si no es posible hervir el agua, compre agua purificada que no esté contaminada. Las autoridades del sistema de agua le avisarán cuando ya no sea necesario hervir el agua.

Preguntas sobre éste aviso pueden ser dirigidas a:

Oficial(es) de Servicios de Agua

Número(s) de teléfono

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§290.47(h) Appendix H. Special Precautions Flowchart.

